

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4315

August 16, 2023

The Honorable DDr. Petra Schneebauer
Ambassador
Embassy of Austria
3524 International Court NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Schneebauer,

As members of the United States Congress and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we recently became aware of the ongoing repatriation efforts by the Government of Mexico for the headdress of Aztec Emperor, Moctezuma II. As you know, this headdress is currently on display in Vienna's Weltmuseum despite attempts made by multiple Mexican administrations to bring it back to Mexico—its place of origin.

As Hispanic Americans ourselves who also represent constituencies with sizeable Hispanic, and more specifically, Mexican American populations, we have a vested interest in this matter. We were heartened to learn of the recently proposed legislation that would begin the process of returning to their countries of origin objects believed to have been stolen or wrongfully obtained in a colonial context.¹

You may know that Mesoamerican history and culture serve as important foundations for much of the modern-day culture in Mexico and the United States. We and our constituents believe it is in the best interest of the Austrian government to follow the example of fellow European nations like Germany and France that have returned valuable historical items to the countries where they originated.² The CHC has full faith in Austria's ability to repatriate this important cultural artifact especially after setting precedent last June by restituting an ancient item used during religious ball games to Mexico.³

¹ Hickley, C. (2023, June 20). Austrian government to propose law on returning museum objects acquired in a colonial context. The Art Newspaper - International art news and events. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/06/20/austrian-government-to-propose-law-on-returning-museum-objects-acquired-in-a-colonial-context>

² Rogers, T., Lassa, R., & Marshall, A. (2022, December 20). How Germany changed its mind, and gave the Benin Bronzes back. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/20/arts/benin-bronzes-nigeria-germany.html>
Cable News Network. (2021, November 12). France returns 26 looted artifacts and artworks to Benin. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/benin-art-returned-scli-intl/index.html>

³ Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. (2023, June 27). Desde Austria, Se restituye al pueblo de México un milenario yugo de piedra sedimentada. INAH, Boletines. <https://www.inah.gob.mx/boletines/desde-austria-se-restituye-al-pueblo-de-mexico-un-milenario-yugo-de-piedra-sedimentada>

Thank you for your attention to this letter. On behalf of our constituents, we look forward to continuing the conversation on the matter of returning culturally significant pieces of history to their countries of origin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'VG' followed by a stylized flourish.

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Nanette Diaz Barragan' in a cursive script.

Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Joaquin Castro' in a cursive script.

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Henry Cuellar' in a cursive script.

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'J Luis Correa' in a cursive script.

J Luis Correa
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Teresa Leger Fernandez' in a cursive script.

Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Juan Vargas' in a cursive script.


Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Robert Garcia' in a cursive script.

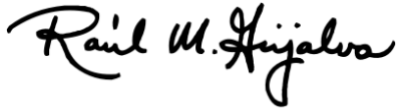
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nydia Velazquez". The script is fluid and cursive.

Nydia Velazquez
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adriano Espaillat". The signature is stylized with long, sweeping horizontal strokes.

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raul M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress